

Keeping Kids' Nutrition Top of Mind at America's Retailers



Health experts agree that childhood obesity, particularly among children in low-income and minority households, is partially due to the limited access and affordability of healthier food and beverage choices. But a major factor in this choice hinges on the way these products are marketed to kids. For this reason, as part of ICCR's Access to Nutrition Initiative, shareholders are engaging media companies and fast food and casual-dining chains to encourage more responsible marketing practices that will encourage healthier food choices and lifestyles for children.

ICCR partners with children's health

As a result of these efforts, ICCR's members and their allies are seeing signs of progress. Several companies are beginning to institutionalize prioritization of "health and wellness" in their governance structures, designating high-level leadership for nutrition-related initiatives and integrating nutrition into corporate social responsibility oversight and reporting mechanisms.

advocacy groups MomsRising, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Rudd Center, the Berkeley Media Studies Group, and the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CBFAI). The work is supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ICCR urges companies in different sectors to take practical steps to help protect children's health, from reducing the fat and salt content of their foods, to improving in-store product placement, and creating healthy, candy-free checkout aisles. One good example is Walmart's "Great for You" icon, a front-of-pack label that Walmart uses to give its customers an easier way to identify healthy food.

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ance of the 'health and wellness' category to today's consumers."

A clear example of progress from member engagements is coming from the restaurant sector. Within the past 2 years, McDonald's, Wendy's, Subway, Chipotle, Arby's, and Panera dropped sugary drinks from their kids' menus, signaling that the fast food and casual dining chains are recognizing the health risks of serving these drinks to children. New momentum came this past November, when DineEquity, owner of Applebee's and IHOP, removed sodas from its kids' menus, after being engaged by ICCR shareholders. The decision was heralded as an important step forward. Said ICCR member Donna Meyer of Mercy Investment Services, "As their investors, we are pleased to see them eliminate the risks sugary

drinks pose for kids, and view this move as a harbinger of future progress on health-related concerns."

ICCR and other members of the Food Marketing Workgroup were also invited to assist in the discussion of updating the "Health and Sustainability Guidelines" of the Department of Health and Human Services and the General Services Administration.

Margolis also attended the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Childhood Obesity conference in early December, with the goal of helping to strengthen the impact of ICCR's Access to Nutrition work through collaboration with representatives from partner organizations across the country.

ICCR members also continue to engage the companies in their portfolios via the proxy resolution process. This fall, members filed a shareholder resolution with entertainment giant Time Warner, asking the company to help foster healthy nutrition for children. The resolution is part of a broader ICCR initiative to help protect children's online privacy and shield them from invasive online marketing of junk food, and includes a new human rights risk assessment resolution sent in late 2015 to Google Inc./Alphabet challenging the paid ads that run on the company's YouTube Kids app.

In the spring of 2016, ICCR's Access to Nutrition group plans to host a Retailer Roundtable focusing on marketing to children at retail.

Said Margolis, "The Roundtable will bring companies from a variety of sectors together with investors and NGOs to develop strategic initiatives to help protect children's health that will benefit both retailers and consumers."